

Melancon urges south Louisiana growers to consider catastrophic protection

October 1, 2008

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced that it will accept late crop insurance applications from Louisiana producers for Catastrophic Risk Protection (CAT) level of coverage for oats, sugarcane, or wheat. Producers now have until October 10, 2008 to sign up for CAT coverage.

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"I called Dr. Keenum to explain the hardships that farmers in my district have faced over the last month -- delayed planting because of extensive rains, back-to-back hurricanes, mandatory evacuations, and curfews," Melancon said.

"Farmers are finally back in the fields, working dawn to dusk, and haven't had much opportunity at all to talk to insurance agents after Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. Today's announcement shows a willingness from the USDA to work with them and while this is not exactly what we wanted, farmers will have ten more days to sign up for CAT coverage."

"Given new disaster assistance eligibility requirements for future storms, I encourage our farmers to take note of this extended enrollment time."

Dr. Mark Keenum serves as Under Secretary of USDA's Farm and Foreign Agricultural Service.

Eldon Gould, Administrator of the Risk Management Agency (RMA), announced in a memo to RMA field offices that "for the 2009 crop year only, Approved Insurance Providers (AIPs) may accept on a case-by-case basis, crop insurance applications not later than October 10, 2008 from producers in the State of Louisiana only for the Catastrophic Risk Protection (CAT) level of coverage for oats, sugarcane, or wheat. Producers must demonstrate that the impacts of Hurricane Gustav and Ike prevented them from making a timely application for crop insurance coverage. No applications for additional coverage policies or coverage changes to carry-over

policies may be accepted after the September 30, 2008, sales closing date."

Federal crop insurance is the primary ongoing crop loss assistance program and is administered by the RMA. The recently passed Farm Bill mandates that producers have the minimum level of crop insurance (CAT coverage) to be eligible for future disaster assistance payments.

Farmers interested in obtaining more information about CAT coverage should call Willie Cooper, Louisiana USDA Executive Director, at (318) 473-7721.

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